Information for Social Change

Information for Social Change Number 33

Winter 2013/14

Recent Developments in Public Services for Young People

Issue Editors:
Paul Catherall & Martyn Lowe

Information for Social Change is an activist organisation that examines issues of censorship, freedom and ethics amongst library and information workers. It is committed to promoting alternatives to the dominant paradigms of library and information work and publishes its own journal, *Information for Social Change* freely available at http://www.libr.org/isc

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The ways by which information is controlled and mediated has a serious influence on the ways people think, how they communicate, what they believe is the "real world", what the limits of the permissible are. This applies equally to information that comes through the channels of the mass media, through our bookshops or through our libraries.

But we want to go further than that, documenting also the alternatives to this control, the radical and progressive channels by which truly unfettered, unmediated ideas may circulate. And further still: to encourage information workers to come together, to share ideas, to foster these alternatives – whether we are publishers, librarians, booksellers, communication workers or distributors. Whoever you are, if you are in sympathy with us, join us.

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Editorial and Contributors

The current climate of austerity imposed by Western governments following the economic downturn of 2008 brought severe reductions in public spending and profound rationalisation of public sector services in affected countries, no more severe than regions such as Spain and Greece, where mass public sector job losses accompanied crippling closure and reduction of state managed infrastructure including health, education, transport, children's services and state managed companies.

The condition for young people in this climate is particularly evident, with significant closure or reduction of services upon which this population group rely, including closure of careers and job support services and dramatic reduction in post-statutory education funding and grants.

This issue of ISC attempts to gather perspectives on recent trends in public service provision for young people, presenting issues as diverse as trends in the University sector, considerations when engaging with young people in campaigning and responses to military recruitment in our schools network. As usual, this issue of ISC provides a combination of formal articles, conversational pieces and personal commentary – with one paper describing a regional example where public services are under threat from local council and national government austerity plans.

This issue of ISC has also been developed at a time when the Library and Information community is becoming more diverse and fractured into an array of non-traditional roles. To this effect, ISC has recently attempted to broaden the kind of commentary provided beyond strict interpretations of Library and Information services provision. ISC recognises the need to network with a broad spectrum of activist colleagues across communities to enable commentary on access to information and for successful transmission of knowledge and meaningful debate.

Paul Catherall

Contributors of this issue include:

Martyn Lowe – Martyn has been involved in many activist groups focused around the peace and ecology movements, including Greenpeace (London), & WRI (War Resisters International). He has recently been active in groups such as Kick Nuclear, Nuclear Trains Action Group, and recently formed the "Close Capenhurst" campaign. Martyn is an editorial board member of Information for Social Change. You can see Martyn's blog at http://www.theproject.me.uk/

Martin Ralph – A former educator having worked across several education sectors, Martin has been a Trades Union activist for many years and is currently an officer within the Liverpool branch of the TUC (Trades Union Congress), Martin is also a branch committee member of the UCU (University and College Union) at University of Liverpool and is an activist within local movements such as Liverpool Against the Cuts (LATC). Martin is a member of the International Socialist League. Martin also maintains strong regional and international links within the Trades Union movement and has participated in overseas anti-austerity campaigns in France, Brazil and other countries in recent years.

Paul Catherall – Paul graduated with a BA(Hons) in English Literature and Media Studies from the North East Wales Institute of Higher Education and a MA(Dist) in Library and Information Management at John Moores University, Liverpool, he has worked in a number of educational sectors including FE and HE, within Libraries, IT and teaching roles. Paul was active in Career Development Group, Wales (CILIP group) 2002-2009 and has been a Trades Union branch committee member with UNISON and UCU (University and College Union). Paul currently works at University of Liverpool as a librarian for online degrees and is undertaking a PhD in the field of E-Learning, Paul's book *Delivering E-Learning* is available from Woodhouse Publishing. Paul is an editorial board member of ISC.

Owen Everett - Owen graduated with a BA (Hons) in History from Warwick University in 2012. He worked jointly at ForcesWatch and War Resisters' International for a year through the Quaker Peace & Social

Witness Peaceworker scheme, during which time he edited the book *Sowing Seeds: The Militarisation of Youth and How to Counter It*. He is now ForcesWatch's Education Campaign worker.

Miriam Dobson - Miriam is currently studying at University of Edinburgh for an MSc in Environment, Culture and Society and graduated from Sheffield University with a BA(Hons) in International History and International Politics. Miriam is active within the Campaign Against the Arms Trade and the student group 'People and Planet'. You can see Miriam's blog at http://miriamdobson.wordpress.com Miriam comments on her activities: "I am currently working towards an MSc at the University of Edinburgh and trying to end the global arms trade and prevent catastrophic climate change whilst I'm at it. Luckily, I'm not the only person trying to do this and the support of other activists around the globe keeps me going when all seems lost! In really desperate situations, never underestimate the power of a good cup of tea."

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The Impact of "Austerity" and Deregulation on Young People's Services in the UK

Paul Catherall

The advent of the 2008 global Recession and an ongoing austerity agenda following the UK Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition Government agreement of 2010 has brought dramatic and sweeping changes to the landscape of services for young people in the UK.

The political context of austerity has been accompanied by devastating neoliberal style government with ensuing depreciation of education services, youth services, disability support, child care, social services & welfare, social housing, careers/job services, business start-ups, libraries, legal aid, mental health, probation & criminal justice.

Many of the above services are of significant importance for young people, who now face unprecedented retrenchment in public spending across meritocratic, welfare and infrastructure related services.

Since 2010, the year the UK saw a new Conservative/ Liberal Democrat coalition government, we have seen the dramatic decline, reduction and marketisation of meritocratic and welfare services upon which young people typically depend to achieve their potential in society.

During 2010-2011 the UK Job Centres were severely reduced in the UK – both in terms of closures and funding - impacting the ability of young adults to access the job market and for employers to disseminate job opportunities to young people. Other core local services used by young

people had already been in decline for many years under the previous 'New Labour' administration (1997-2010), with widespread closures of Libraries, Community Centres and cuts to education and charities funding for youth community schemes.

Perhaps the most significant impact on young people in these years comprised the major educational reforms of the 2010 Coalition (Conservative/Liberal Democrat) government, including the effective abolition of the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) for young people in Further Education, this allowance was relied upon by many young people for basic transport, books and equipment costs. The abolition of EMA closely followed the outcomes of the New Labour sponsored Browne Report into Higher Education, published 2010, including the dramatic increase in Higher Education undergraduate tuition fees (up to £9000 per annum) and a greater emphasis on student loans and payment of University costs over the students' lifetime.

The resulting riots and civil unrest which followed these developments in November 2010, with tens of thousands of mostly young people marching in England's major cities indicated the growing engagement of young people with politics and in particular their participation in debate on educational funding. One of the most visible aspects of the protests included significant numbers of school age participants, adding testament to the active engagement of young people in a political context where they had no vote, but where they refused not to be heard. It is important to note that the 2010 riots occurred only in English urban areas and did not impact the devolved regions of the UK, perhaps reflecting the retention of Higher & Further Education funding in Wales and Scotland.

Young people's services and welfare had already been under severe attack since the arrival of the 1997 New Labour government, with the introduction of universal University tuition fees, abolition of Higher Education maintenance grants in England and start of a process to de-centralise and liberalise wider aspects of UK public infrastructure, including the development of quasi-independent NHS Trusts & mass health care outsourcing, closure of local Post Offices, reduction of Public Libraries and transfer of social care services under private agencies. This era also saw the beginning of government advocacy for the "Third Sector", enabling charities and businesses to operate public services, often for profit. Many of these damaging reforms would be continued and expanded under the subsequent Coalition government of 2010. Education reforms under the New Labour government also saw the

introduction of the Academy schools network in 2000, an approach to transfer the management of schools from Local Authority control to corporate or charities-based organisations. There are reported to be 371 Academy Schools in England at the time of writing (Winter 2013) representing around 11% of the UK secondary schools provision. The model is now also being expanded to primary schools.

The Academies school model has been entrenched by subsequent New Labour and Conservative/LibDem Acts of Parliament, including The Academies Act 2010 (for England) which excluded Academies from basic statutory requirements, such as aspects of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA). The Education Act 2011 also dismantled major regulatory frameworks for the regulation of school education in England, abolishing agencies such as the General Teaching Council for England, the Curriculum Development Agency and Training and Development Agency for Schools. These reforms have allowed for the expansion of Academies, allowing their exclusion from government transparency and oversight and collectively represent an ongoing assault by the neoliberal UK establishment on state schools in England.

As a consequence of these recent reforms, Academies are now exempt from following the UK National Curriculum – previously providing a benchmark for the delivery of class based educational content - these schools are also exempt from Local Education Authority (LEA) influence except in cases of public safety, welfare and related issues, they are also exempt from requirement for local consultation or the need for parent-teacher forums; outcomes of these exemptions have included reduced requirements to support children and young people with learning or physical disabilities and increasing numbers of teachers without a formal teaching qualification.

Other characteristics evidenced in schools now grouped under the Academies label have included poor accountability within communities, over-use of exclusion & disciplinary responses to student challenges and the introduction of unhealthy foods into school catering facilities. These schools have also become exempt from some health and safety regulations. Another controversy concerns the encroachment of Creationist religious groups as operators of Academies. These issues were widely reported in the Guardian newspaper during 2011 e.g.

http://www.theguardian.com/education/2011/jul/25/secondary-school-streaming

The "Big Society" agenda of 2010-12, accompanied by budget cuts, closures, deregulation and abolition of core public infrastructure relied upon by young people will surely be seen in the years to come as a period akin to (and more severe than) the Regan era of the Unites States, which saw public services and meritocratic reforms reversed in favour of radical marketisation and reduction of state provision. The young people of today will have a smaller stake in our social hegemony than their predecessors, fuelling a culture of individualism and diminishing our sense of community and social ethos.

The implications for "austerity" and the depreciation of public services for young people will not simply be felt in terms of economics, prosperity or educational attainment but will be reflected in fundamental ways, reflecting a decline in our social democracy and our meritocracy which is now seriously at risk due to current educational deregulation.

Links

BBC (2011). One in 10 secondary schools is now an academy: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-1212188

British Humanist Association (2013), Majority of identifiable Free School proposals from 2011-13 were religious: https://humanism.org.uk/2013/03/22/majority-of-identifiable-free-school-proposals-from-2011-13-were-religious

38 Degrees (national campaigns to save public services): http://www.38degrees.org.uk/

Coalition of Resistance / The People's Assembly: http://www.coalitionofresistance.org.uk/

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Academy Schools and the Anti-Academies Alliance - Opposing the Marketisation of the English Schools Network

Paul Catherall

This paper explores one of the most damaging and brutal attacks on our meritocratic infrastructure in the UK, representing the reversal of decades of educational progress and reform, namely the rise of the de-regulated Academies schools network and forced Academisation of well performing state schools.

Speaking as someone who knew family members who did not have the benefit of the educational opportunities of the 1970s and 80s following the Crossland memorandum and related reforms of the late 1960s - *including family members who were educated only until the age of 11 in some cases* - I find the concept of school deregulation both naive and anti-meritocratic, representing deprivation of basic educational entitlements as enshrined in the Universal declaration of human rights; the deregulation of statutory education represents an economically damaging prospect for our country and a step back toward a society more properly consigned to the class-ridden dystopias of Dickens and Hocking.

The Academies School project in England was begun under the New Labour government of Tony Blair via the Learning and Skills Act 2000 (http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/21/contents) The Act allowed

for the creation of the City Academies schools in England (for 11-16 Secondary School provision), which were allowed to operate on a far more independent basis than regular State funded schools (mainly Comprehensive Schools), including autonomy in areas such as school operational/ curriculum management outside the control of the LEA (Local Education Authority), staffing policy/pay and budgetary control. These schools could also specialise in a particular area of excellence, termed "Specialist Academies".

The Academies schools were intended to provide a free market solution to government-branded failings in the state-maintained and predominantly LEA managed statutory schools sector, however the ethos of the Academy schools is demonstratively political, with the sidelining of many basic regulatory frameworks and opportunity for third party interests such as for-profit companies or charities to bid for academy contracts.

The outcome of Academies has been the emergence of a two-tier education system in England, with LEA-operated Comprehensive schools & other maintained state schools on one hand and Academy schools on the other, existing beyond the scrutiny available to the LEA and regulatory frameworks such as the National Curriculum.

Whilst proponents of the free market model for UK education have lauded the Academies project over the last 14 years or so, the schools stand as quintessential examples of public service deregulation, with widespread dislocation from national and local agencies, codes of practice and regulatory frameworks such as the Curriculum, school safety standards, special educational needs provision, school meals, health monitoring, use of religious vs. secular teaching emphasis, discipline and motivation policy and general oversight and transparency. Academy schools have also been shown to pursue a greater range of vocational teaching than state maintained schools.

The cost of the Academies project, largely spent on corporate style contracts to third parties comprising Academies "trusts" has been enormous, after only a few years of implementation, the UK government had spent almost £500 million on new academy start-ups across only 17 schools, this was revealed in a Guardian article in 2004: http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2004/aug/31/schools.newschools

It is likely the current bill for the Academies project in 2013/14 totals tens of billions of pounds for Academy contracts, representing a colossal rise in expenditure from the previous LEA funded approach.

The role of profit stands as an obvious outcome for the marketisation of schools under Academy management, with companies and other entities clearly operating the schools for financial gain.

The question remains why such enormous sums have been spent in this way instead of simply re-focusing funds back into Comprehensive schools infrastructure and teaching. The average cost of creating an Academy has been shown to total £25 million; criticism has also been directed toward corporate directors and officers running these schools, earning up to six figure salaries – as revealed in the Guardian newspaper: http://www.theguardian.com/education/2011/nov/14/academies-pay-200k-salaries This situation is all the more shocking when considering the crippling block on state funded school maintenance grants which were widely withheld between 2010-11, at the same time, vast sums were being earmarked for a new series of Academies, Academy conversions (often forced against local consent) and Free Schools (discussed elsewhere in this issue of ISC).

On a related note, it can be seen that performance-related pay for teachers working in Academies and appointment of teachers without formal teaching qualifications represent a cost-reduction strategy in the Academies schools sector, both these issues have prompted alarm from parents, trades unions and teachers groups, indicating further dangerous consequences of deregulation in this sector.

Another criticism of the Academies includes selection where, due to lack of LEA oversight or transparency, the schools are able to ignore national schools admission guidelines and "cherry pick" pupils based on parental background, this issue has been widely reported in the press anecdotally since the creation of the Academy schools system in 2000 (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/4348931.stm).

The Academy schools have also been the recipients of start-up funds unavailable to regular state/ LEA schools such as comprehensives; similarly, long standing state school new builds funding has been blocked during the administration of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government and this money appears to have been channelled toward new Academy schools and Free Schools.

The "Pupil Premium" - sums of money paid per pupil head introduced following the Conservative-Liberal Democrat government of 2010 also epitomises the failure of these schools to operate on a normative basis in

terms of retention, exclusions and support for pupils having additional needs, this direct payment to schools represents an incentive to Academy schools to invest in disadvantaged, "statemented" or otherwise struggling pupils in the absence of proper LEA governance and funding which would otherwise nurture these children under normal regulatory funding.

To this extent, the Pupil Premium, whilst offering welcome funding for schools represents nothing more than funds being siphoned from genuine funding streams, such as schools maintenance and represents a free market nudge encouraging investment in pupils in the absence of a properly regulated sector.

Considerable concern has been raised regarding the vocationalisation of Academies in recent years, with a disproportionate use of NVQ and vocational style qualifications in the place of academic qualifications and subject areas such as foreign languages, one interpretation of this trend suggests this approach has boosted Academy success rates due to the nature of vocational courses vs. rigorous academic study, this issue, alongside use of unqualified teachers and exemption from the Curriculum by Academies represents a serious threat to the quality of education for children and young people, and an attack on our meritocratic system.

The Academy Schools have also faced widespread opposition from local communities, parents groups, Trades Unions and other social democratic groups opposed to the marketisation of the state schools sector (see some links to campaigns below this article) – often handing control of schools over to inexperienced corporate providers with questionable religious or ideological views, this was evidenced at Conisbrough near Doncaster in 2003 when the Labour local council decided to transform an award-winning local comprehensive school to an Academy under the Vardy Foundation - an evangelical and creationist schools chain. By 2005 local opposition resulted in the plan being overturned and preservation of the comprehensive school in question. This incident and the wider political context demonstrates not only the resolve of local people to recognise the damaging implications of educational deregulation, but also demonstrates the troubling capacity of the Labour party leadership and elements in local government to drive through damaging marketisation of our schools infrastructure - most shockingly impacting vulnerable children and young adults (this incident was reported in the Guardian in 2005: http://www.theguardian.com/books/2005/jan/15/features.politics).

Whilst the Academy schools have been applauded by free market proponents across the UK political establishment they have sometimes

been shown to fail when subjected to transparent and rigorous monitoring; most recently, the UK schools watchdog Ofstead has placed the Unity City Academy in Middlesbrough and the Richard Rose Central Academy in Carlisle in special measures due to poor standards, a similar list of enforcements and closures has also been seen amongst the recently created "Free Schools".

The Academies Project is unfortunately an indication of the current establishment consensus toward education marketisation in the UK, with New Labour, Liberal Democrat and Conservative parties all supporting the programme; this programme includes recent Academy expansion for (pre-11) Primary Schools and the aggressive forced transformation of state schools to Academy status by local and national government. This formal agenda is demonstrated by the 2010 Academies Act, co-authored by Conservative and Liberal Democrat ministers, the latter enabling these measures despite numerous rulings against the Academies and Free Schools projects at LibDem party conference and widespread evidence of opposition by LibDem members (one indication of this trend is the public resignation of numerous LibDem activists on the LibDem Act forum http://act.libdems.org.uk/ which has seen hardly any posts since 2011).

It should be noted that the Academies issue is largely localised to the regions of England due to the devolved nature of the UK, with the remit for devolved education policy being respectively in the hands of the Welsh Assembly Government, Scottish Government and Northern Irish Assembly. These administrations have largely opted not to pursue the Academies project, instead maintaining broad hegemony with state-maintained UK schools regulation, the National Curriculum, use of Local Education Authorities to manage schools and appoint teachers, implementation of Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision and development of additional interpretative regulations.

The Anti Academies Alliance http://antiacademies.org.uk is an organisation fighting the expansion of the Academies project and campaigning against the Academies system in England. Many Trades Unions such as TUC, NASUWT, NUT, ATL etc. are affiliated to the Anti Academies Alliance. The Alliance opposes individual pupil selection and restrictions on admissions of special educational needs pupils, it opposes the extreme levels of exclusion evidenced in Academy Schools; the alliance also demands that Academies are subject to the same universal regulation as state schools and the return to full parent-teacher democratic processes- the Alliance demands proper governance

structures are re-instated (Academies are only required to appoint 2 governors under current rules), and that the schools apply the same high standards for staffing, appointments and staff pay seen in normal state schools (describing discriminatory practices which result in high staff turnover).

In summation, it can be seen that the Academy schools project threatens our UK infrastructure with serious and damaging transformation of state and LEA regulated schools into deregulated and marketised entities, often operated for profit with dubious and shocking consequences for students, parents and educators. The political climate in the UK at present demonstrates a worrying establishment consensus in favour of the Academies project, threatening to similarly impact the Primary schools sector and offering a worrying model to Further Education provision in the UK. There can be no more revealing indicator on the dangers of careless marketisation of our public infrastructure than the threat of education deregulation, especially where vulnerable children and young adults become pawns of an ideologically-driven neoliberal political agenda. The impact of Academies on our young people, on our meritocratic state and social values cannot be overemphasised and opposition to the Academies project is surely one of the most important current struggles for all individuals of conscience across all political persuasions.

Links

The Anti-Academies Alliance: http://antiacademies.org.uk/

Hands off our schools campaign: http://nottsantiacademies.org/

Local schools network: http://www.localschoolsnetwork.org.uk

NUT (National Union of Teachers) Academies
Portal: http://www.teachers.org.uk/academies

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E-Learning – Some observations in 2014

Paul Catherall

Since around the early 2000s we have seen the widespread adoption of E-Learning technologies, initially within the Higher Education sector, and now also prolific within the Further Education and Statutory Schools sectors.

E-Learning technologies, comprised for the most part by Web based platforms, delivering a combination of static document-type information and interactive multimedia-type content such as quizzes, video or interactive tutorials have become ubiquitous across all Education sectors in the US and UK and are quickly gaining momentum as a means of teaching delivery in other counties.

Early concerns regarding E-Learning included practical considerations such as technical, operational and management issues for installing, developing and maintaining E-Learning systems, academic considerations concerning pedagogy (the science of teaching), concerns on how experimental E-Learning systems would replicate conventional teaching methods and questions regarding the broader cultural experience of learning via virtualised interactions or activities. Concerns were also raised by educators concerned by the prospect of "Digital Diploma Mills" – highly systemised and automated learning environments described in a series of seminal papers by David Noble:
http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/issue/view/108.

The emergence of E-Learning has perhaps been most prolific in the Higher Education sector, where the use of Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) – Web based content systems capable of storing and presenting a wide range of digital content for learners has become an established part of the Higher Education undergraduate experience. Whilst the use of module documentation, course syllabi and interactive or multimedia content has augmented conventional class teaching, the VLE has also emerged as the main vehicle for delivery of an increasing array of online-focused University degrees and shorter professional programmes such as CPD development courses.

This latter context has allowed for the development of remote and overseas study programmes which hitherto would have been difficult to achieve without expensive correspondence-style methods traditionally practiced by the UK's Open University (involving hardcopy texts, physical media, tapes etc.) The flexibility offered by online education is particularly evident in so-called "A-Synchronous" teaching, where students and staff do not necessarily communicate, interact, study or submit coursework in a shared time frame, but can do so in different time frames via online discussion forums, email or other individual participant activities not dependant on real-time one-to-one or group interaction.

At the other end of the spectrum, participants and staff can interact in a "Synchronous" time frame, perhaps communicating via an online chat or video environment or in real-time via a discussion board or video-conference facility; "Synchronous" E-Learning has emerged as less practical in the purely remote e-learning context, limited by the differing geographical time zones of staff and students and demand for individual study/work flexibility, often managed around busy personal, work and other responsibilities.

The outcome for E-Learning in the class-based or "blended" context can therefore be said to have had an important but less striking impact than for purely remote study, in this context we can see UK Higher Education policy following a definite trend to adapt educational and business practices via online learning and to capitalise on the emerging digital literacy of local and international populations - the latter representing a new and increasingly important market for Higher Education in the online context.

We have seen significant advocacy from UK and other Western governments for expanded use of E-Learning in recent years, this has been elucidated via a large number of UK Government white papers and

legislation calling for development of this infrastructure to facilitate the trend toward remote study, flexible Learning and lifelong learning in the interests of economic development.

The earlier concerns of educators, librarians and other stakeholders have proven to be accurate to a fair degree, with an inevitable challenge presented for maintaining social & cultural interactions and learning experiences enjoyed by students based in the class-based environment, this is particularly voiced by overseas students studying in an online context where the British cultural and linguistic experience may be lacking when studying in an online context.

Operational challenges for delivering E-Learning have become apparent over the last decade, especially as Universities have expanded online teaching provision from early trial phases in the early 2000s to more prolific expansion, encompassing subject diversity and student populations equal to some on-campus student populations.

Indeed, with poorly defined rules on overseas/international student number quotas, UK Universities have expanded class coverage to many thousands of students for some programmes, demanding equally efficient systems and staffing protocols for maintaining technical infrastructure, dealing with admissions and user/programme records, handling user queries and complaints, handling online reading lists & online Library resources such as E-Books and managing the complex task of online teaching and course delivery in accordance with institutional policy and practice.

Further challenges include technical problems - especially for students or staff based in developing regions with poorer internet, telecommunications or energy infrastructure and communications and cultural needs e.g. the need to avoid local UK colloquial language to ensure clarity for textual and spoken communications.

Universities have quickly grasped E-Learning as a tool for delivery and internationalisation of their services - adopting an online learning & teaching model increasingly resembling the provision of a globalised product vs. their historic public service role as a local or national educational provider.

Universities also face widespread competition from newer Web-based education companies, professional bodies and large multinational providers such as Microsoft with their online certification programme; these non-traditional providers however remain at a significant

disadvantage in comparison with state-chartered Universities, lacking a means of formally recognised programme accreditation.

The arrival of MOOC courses – Massive Open Online Courses, pioneered by the Open University, MIT and other universities to provide freely accessible but usually non-accredited programmes has presented new challenges and opportunities for Universities, namely the potential decline of expensive programme enrolment in contrast to freely accessible MOOCs, questions concerning Intellectual Property, Open Access status and copyright licensing, implications such as user support for potentially significant uptake by developing regions and potential casualisation of education detracting from formal programme structure and accreditation.

The emergence of online education has also occurred in partnership with an array of stakeholders beyond the local University setting, some obvious examples of these stakeholders include the software companies working with institutions to deliver and maintain the technology or "courseware" used; in some cases Universities have also worked with external companies to operate online teaching, examples of well established online education companies include Pearson online learning and the Montagu owned University of Law, in some cases these organisations and their parent companies have a diverse multi-national presence and portfolios in other sectors and industries.

In some respects we are still in early days with regard to the emergence of remote-based online education, with full phase online teaching having only recently emerged from the early pilots and small-scale operations in the early 2000s, we now stand at a future for learning and teaching where pedagogy and instructional design will be required to provide solutions for this growing educational and economically prolific context, it remains to be seen how far E-Learning can compensate for traditional educational experiences and how far E-Learning modes of delivery will supplant conventional teaching. The implications for education are however undeniably significant and the field of E-Learning is an area deserving of ongoing research and debate into the current decade.

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Engaging students and young people in campaigning

Miriam Dobson

As a student and anti-arms trade activist, a question I am faced with time and again when speaking to veteran members of the anti-war campaign is this: how do we reach out to students and young people – the next generation of activists – to involve them in these long standing campaigns? In the context of the work of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, this question is an especially pertinent one at the moment, as the parliamentary vote for the renewal of the Trident nuclear deterrent system looms just three years away on the horizon.

There are three main issues when it comes to dealing with students and young people, and this article will discuss each in turn in order to build a guide for campaigners looking to engage younger generations. As a student, I will be focusing primarily on engaging students as that is my background; however, much of the below information can be applied to young people whether in full-time education or not. Firstly, it is important to understand the context that students live in today; secondly, the question of Trident must be made directly relevant to young people; and thirdly, a number of practical steps can be taken to make meetings and campaigns more accessible and engaging.

It is imperative that we understand just who young people are. Students – the group I have most knowledge and affinity with, having been one

myself for the past three years – are faced with numerous pressures today that have not existed for this age group in the recent past. Unlike generations previously, who were subsidised to attend university through government grants, and who were almost certain of a job – indeed, a career – upon graduating, today's students have no such sureties. With university fees of £9,000 per year – and living costs on top of that – students today are faced with the prospect of being £50,000 in debt by the time they reach the age of 22. Rising costs of living and an abysmal job market means many students, shouldering this debt, are upon graduating forced to move home, often to parts of the country with little or no career prospects available. The rise of the surveillance state through government access to the Internet means that for students needing a job straight out of university, being careful about what they get involved in whilst at university is paramount. If there is evidence online of being involved in political actions or protests, that evidence literally never gets deleted – and is there waiting for any prospective employer to find. The pressure to get a good job in order to pay off staggering amounts of debt means that many students today are forced to focus exclusively on their studies in order to get the best degree possible just to have a hope of getting a good job. On top of this, sub-standard student living loans means that many students are also forced to work part-time whilst at university. This leaves little or no room for being involved in activism, which can be a draining and time-consuming dedication. In light of this, it becomes clear that the image of today's young people as apathetic is seriously misguided: young people are not apathetic, but they are disenfranchised, sidelined and under incredible amounts of pressure from all sides. September's mass arrests at the demonstration in London against the English Defence League, the demonization of the student protestors in 2010, and increasing crackdowns by the police are also all events that are creating barriers of fear for young people who, whilst they may care deeply about the issues at hand, cannot contemplate the possibility of ending up with a criminal record and unable to find work as a result.

These various pressures have led to the perceived decline in political engagement and activism amongst young people. However, this is not an excuse to give up on young people's involvement in campaigning. The key, which I personally have found and others my age agree, is to make the issues at stake relevant to the pressures and problems facing individuals. It can be overwhelming to be a young person growing up in the world today: rolling news broadcasts swing between devastating wars, catastrophic climate change, pandemic disease scares, and brutal

demonization of the working class by the current government. Faced with this, it is a much more attractive option to try and hide from it all then it is to try and work out where to even begin to start in tackling the problems of the world today.

So in terms of Trident, and the anti-nuclear campaign, highlighting that no issue exists in a vacuum is of paramount importance. The most recent Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament campaign has been an exemplary example of this. By highlighting that the renewal of Trident will cost £100bn, and linking this in to the devastating cuts being dealt to the less well-off in today's society, the relevance of Trident is clearly highlighted. For example, if Trident was not renewed, enough money would be saved to cancel all tuition fees for all university students in the UK for the next fifty years. In light of this, the foolishness of a Trident renewal becomes clear, and young people faced with the burdens of university-induced debt become angry.

It is important to engage with the issues we are discussing honestly. Young people are not idiots, and are certainly not unaware of the issues facing the world today. The stereotype of a lazy student eating pizza whilst watching mindless television is not a complete picture. Sometimes I eat pizza whilst watching mindless television. Sometimes I also take part in direct action against the arms trade. And sometimes I stay up all night studying for my postgraduate degree. One action does not exclude the other; by assuming the worst about students, older campaigners are showing gross insensitivity to the complexities of human beings, and a complete lack of awareness of the aforementioned pressures that today's young people are under. Treating young people as adults, because that is what they are – sixteen-year-olds are allowed by law to serve in the armed forces, for example – will go a long way to engaging them, and providing your campaign with fresh voices and energy.

Finally, it is important to remember proactive ways to engage with young people. Social media, love it or hate it, has become the way the majority of young people in the Western world communicate for a large proportion of the time. It is an incredibly powerful tool for engaging people without physically having to track them down, and any campaign looking for members should be utilising it as a priority, at least in the beginning. If trying to engage with students, meetings that take place in obscure suburbs far away from the university area of town will simply not be attended by students who are new to the town or city you are meeting in and unsure about venturing too far away from the places they know. And

finally, be aware that students tend to get involved in student-led, university-based campaigns first and foremost: there may already be a relevant campaign at a campus near you. Find relevant activities that exist already, build links and contacts, work together – and the levels of enthusiasm and engagement that young people actually have, despite stereotypes, may just surprise you.

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Recent Developments in Public Services for Young People

Free Schools

Paul Catherall

As part of its "Big Society" agenda (intended to displace state-run services by community-run enterprises and voluntary work), the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government launched its "Free Schools" programme (via the Education Act 2011 and "New Schools Network").

There are currently 174 "Free Schools" with an average start up cost of £6.6 million, receiving funds directly from the UK Government. The entire Free Schools budget was set at 1.5 billion in December 2013 http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-25304382

Anyone can set up a Free School, including parents, teachers, charities or businesses. One aspect of the Free Schools is their prioritisation for funding over other categories of school, which has drawn criticism following longstanding blocking of infrastructure funding for state-maintained schools.

Like Academies, Free Schools operate outside Local Authority control but are more radical in terms of their exemptions from statutory regulations. It was originally envisaged that parents groups would step forward to develop these schools as largely independent community-driven ventures, operating largely autonomously from state intervention, however it has been seen that most Free Schools have been created by religious groups,

many of these schools have since been found to be dysfunctional and have had to be closed down, recently including a school in West Sussex (http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-25369094) and a school in Derby (http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-26083099).

The rise of Free Schools, siphoning schools funding which should be spent on genuine schools facilitated by qualified and experienced teachers is a travesty which sits alongside the Academies marketisation project; it appears the Free Schools project is now generating a mini "industry" of new school start-ups, operated by individuals entirely outside Local Authority or national regulatory control (beyond an "inspection" by the Government following 2 years of operation – additionally this inspection does not appear to represent formal Ofstead regulatory monitoring as used in the case of normal state-maintained schools).

The use of unqualified teachers and exemption from regular schools standards such as the National Curriculum, SENDA (special educational needs) and failure to demonstrate transparency in areas such as pupil admissions provides another catalogue of failures and deregulatory experimentation alongside the Academies Project.

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Recent Developments in Public Services for Young People

Looking Back At My School Days

Martyn Lowe

Missing.

While at school there was something missing from my education: -

- A key to knowledge.

- A key to understanding the world around me.

- A key to understanding how all information and knowledge is interrelated.

I do so wish that I had been taught it.

Grateful.

For what I did learn at School: -

- I'm very grateful for the lessons which I received on the subject of Ethics.

- I'm pleased to have an understanding of numbers which I acquired through learning the multiplication tables by heart.

- I rejoice that I was taught map reading.

Yet.

There was one major subject which I should of been taught.

- How to read and understand Dewey classification numbers.

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Recent Developments in Public Services for Young People

Military activity in UK schools

Owen Everett

The encroachment of the UK military and 'military ethos' on the UK education system means that alternatives to war and peaceful ways of resolving conflict will be more difficult for young people to explore.

Young people – children – around the world encounter the military and military approaches in many different ways, from the presence of military personnel and hardware in public spaces; to military youth groups such as the cadets; Armed Forces advertisements online and on television; video games developed by or with the military; and military involvement in education. They are encouraged to see the military and military approaches as normal, necessary, often the best solution to problems/conflicts, and – crucially - to be supported, not questioned.

A recent book by War Resisters' International book, *Sowing Seeds: The Militarisation of Youth and How to Counter It* (2013), shows - through articles, surveys, images, and quotes - how young people around the world are experiencing these encounters, and how this privileging and lack of balance can be challenged. One chapter focuses in part on the military's presence and influence in Education, which is a primary way in which they recruit and imbue a sense of uncritical pride or admiration towards the Armed Forces among future adult citizens. (You can read the book for free, or buy a hard copy, at www.wri-irg.org/SowingSeedsOnline)

This is very relevant to my work at ForcesWatch, a research and campaigning organisation focusing on the ethics of military recruitment in the UK (http://forceswatch.net). As Education Campaign worker, my main task is running the Military Out Of Schools campaign (www.forceswatch.net/projects/details?quicktabs_3=2#quicktabs-3), which seeks to get people to question whether military and military-style activities in schools are appropriate – are they in the best interests of young people? The Army, Navy and Royal Air Force between them made around 11,000 visits to UK secondary schools and colleges in 2011-12. The distribution of visits is uneven: in some areas a very high proportion of schools and colleges are visited, sometimes multiple times in the same year (in Edinburgh 96% of state secondary schools were visited between 2010-2, on average six times over the two years; one school was visited 22 times). Private schools are visited proportionately less, and less frequently. The visits range from presentations on life in the Armed Forces to outdoor team activities. The Ministry of Defence admits that the two main outcomes of these visits are recruitment and 'providing positive information to influence future opinion formers'. (For references, and to read more about these visits – including concerns that they raise - see http://forceswatch.net/sites/default/files/Military%20in%20UK%20schools%20new%20May%202013.pdf)

The Ministry of Defence deny that the Armed Forces recruit during these visits, and insist that they only visit when invited, but both of these claims are misleading. Although pupils do not sign their contract on school premises during the visit (the MoD's definition of recruitment), many of the school visits involve a recruitment element such as a mention of how to sign up. Recruitment can be a gradual process - indeed in 2007 the then-head of Army recruitment strategy Colonel David Allfrey said 'Our new model is about raising awareness, and that takes a ten-year span. It starts with a seven-year-old boy seeing a parachutist at an air show and thinking, 'That looks great.' From then the army is trying to build interest by drip, drip, drip."' (www.newstatesman.com/politics/2007/02/british-army-recruitment-iraq) – in this sense a school visit can be a later stage in a process that started much earlier. Regarding the second claim, it's true that the Armed Forces only visit when they have an invitation, because otherwise they would be trespassing! However, they usually initiate contact with the schools, so it is very much a solicited invite, only possible thanks to the huge amount of money in the MoD's 'youth engagement' budget. The fact that the MoD resort to this obscure reasoning indicates that they are aware that there would be significant public uneasiness if the fact that their visits had a significant recruitment

element and that they were pushing hard to be admitted to schools in the first place. (For an in-depth deconstruction of the MoD's claims not to recruit in schools and to only visit when invited, see http://forceswatch.net/blog/unpacking-recruitment-what-does-mod-mean-when-it-says-armed-forces-do-not-run-recruitment-activ)

A new development in the military influence in UK schools is the government's 'Military Ethos in schools programme'. This is partly a response to perceived poor discipline and attainment in some schools, and includes initiatives such as Troops to Teachers (fast-tracking ex-Armed Forces people into teaching jobs), the expansion of the Combined Cadet Force units into 100 state schools (in the past they've mostly been based in private schools), military-style activities for 'disengaged' or 'at risk of becoming disengaged' pupils (including 'Challenger Troop' – activities in military uniform instead of lessons), and 'exploring how academies and Free Schools can use their freedoms to foster a military ethos and raise standards' (www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/youngpeople/militaryethos). Labour's 'Service Ethos' policy proposal is very similar, focusing on Service Schools, the Combined Cadet Force, and Military Mentors (www.yourbritain.org.uk/uploads/editor/files/THE_SERVICE_ETHOS.pdf). (For videos on Troops To Teachers, the Combined Cadet Force, and alternative provision with a military ethos, go to www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLopjtjH3GYCOZk2rSgLKmYuIk2PO4h3V6&feature=edit_ok) There are currently over 250 CCF contingents, many of which have Navy and Air Force units as well as Army units (the latter are the most numerous), and involve around 45,000 pupils. In addition, there are 'at least' 272 community cadet units which are based on school premises but run outside school hours. (www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/28390/20120705_yer_final.pdf)

CCF at Wellington College

CCF at Wellington College

The big question is: who really benefits from all this? In their 2011 Youth Engagement Review the MoD only mention young people's personal and social development as an additional or incidental outcome, after the 'two clear defence outcomes' of raising 'awareness of the Armed Force' role in the world and the quality of its work and people, in order to ensure the

continued support of the population; and recruitment of the young men and women that are key to future sustainment and success' (www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/28390/20120705_yer_final.pdf), the same two main outcomes acknowledged for their school visits. In contrast, the Department for Education, which is behind the Military Ethos in Schools initiatives, state that their core values associated with the military - 'loyalty, resilience, courage and teamwork, to name but a few.' – will 'help raise standards and tackle issues such as behaviour', and that 'By improving pupils' behaviour, and instilling a sense of service to others, the impact will also be felt across schools and the wider community.' (www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/youngpeople/militaryethos/a00217000/military-ethos-in-schools)

Two outcomes of the Military Ethos programme not stated explicitly by the DfE, but noted in two of the main documents which they say informed the policy, are recruitment, and providing employment for veterans: '[Ex-soldiers in schools] could also relieve the chronic recruiting problems faced by our armed forces...Knowing (and probably respecting) someone who has had a successful military career would ease some of the difficulties faced by the armed forces in finding suitable recruits.' (www.cps.org.uk/files/reports/original/111027170546-20080214PublicServicesTroopsToTeachers.pdf); '[the programme] would create an additional incentive for joining the UK's Reserve Forces by providing significant employment opportunities and a clear career path for those considering membership.' (www.respublica.org.uk/documents/jnw_ResPublica%20Military%20Academies.pdf)

It is part of schools' duty of care to present a balanced view of life in the Armed Forces and of the realities of war: the 1996 Education Act demands that 'where political issues are brought to the attention of pupils... they are offered a balanced presentation of opposing views' (www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/section/407). This is particularly pertinent given the recruitment aspect of the military's activity in schools, as it is often the youngest recruits from the most disadvantaged backgrounds who are most at risk of death and serious mental and physical injury, due to their over-representation in the most frontline combat-exposed sections of the Armed Forces, such as the Infantry (see our reports at http://forceswatch.net), not to mention the uniquely restrictive 'terms of service', which – if broken – can lead to up to life in prison. Already given little attention, there is a danger that as military

approaches further encroach on UK schools, discussion of these important issues will be overlooked even more. (For a more detailed critique of the military's varied influence in UK schools, see www.opendemocracy.net/5050/emma-sangster/militarising-education)

Another issue is the cost to the taxpayer, at a time when so many youth services are experiencing cuts. It is difficult to calculate the cost of Armed Forces visits to schools, but Service Presentation Teams represent some of the highest of the MoD's youth engagement - '£18 per student per presentation' (though '[i]n some cases schools bear all of the costs') – but they are deemed worth it as one of 'those quality and memorable activities which involve personnel...the best way of conveying our information is through the medium of military and civilian personnel who can add veracity to statements and imagery, and allow the all important discussions with young people'. (MoD, 2007 'Engagement with UK Schools: Survey By Directorate General Media and Communications') The CCF cost the MoD £26 million per year - though this does not include staffing, accommodation or transport – approximately £557 per cadet. The MoD states that this 'appear[s] relatively good value compared to other publically funded youth providers', but they are only comparing it to Canadian Cadet Force, and National Citizen Service, and are not factoring in the costs that schools have to cover - 'A new 120-strong cadet force unit would cost a school around £60,000 per year' (www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/28390/20120705_yer_final.pdf; http://education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/youngpeople/militaryethos/cadetforces/a00210719/information-for-schools) The Military Ethos programme is costing £26.45 million up until 2015: £10.85 million for the new CCF contingents; £12.4 million for Troops to Teachers Initial Teacher Training; and £3.2 million on four alternative provision schemes. (www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm130306/text/130306w0002.htm)

Young people are obviously the ones most affected by all this. Some have asked hard questions of military visitors to their schools, and The Woodcraft Folk have started their own Military Out Of Schools campaign (www.spanthatworld.com/campaigns). Other young people just haven't had the opportunity to decide what they think, perhaps because they haven't been told about the downsides of joining the Armed Forces, or explored the ethical questions that war and the preparation for war raise. One way that we at ForcesWatch are helping them to do this is through a short documentary film that we've commissioned on what teenagers in

the UK think about the military's engagement with them, which is being made by a team of teenage journalists (http://wefund.com/project/young-people-and-the-military-a-documentary/p57343). We hope that the film – which will be available to watch for free online - will help to give them a voice, and make other young people interested in the issue. We also do workshops in schools and at youth events looking at how and why the military engage with young people, and we recently held a conference on 'Militarisation in Everyday Life in the UK', which had youth engagement as one of its focuses, and which involved participants of all ages and from academic, campaigning, and faith backgrounds.

One of our workshops

One other thing to mention is that we are writing a report on the presence and influence of the military in UK universities, which includes several parallels to that in schools, such as paying students through their undergraduate studies on the condition that they serve for at least three years afterwards (similar to the Armed Forces Sixth Form bursaries), and running University Service Units (the officer-level version of the Combined Cadet Force), as well as being the focus of a lot of science and engineering research.

If you'd like to share your experiences of the military in schools, colleges, or universities, or ask any questions, email education@forceswatch.net.

Owen Everett

Owen graduated with a BA (Hons) in History from Warwick University in 2012. He worked jointly at ForcesWatch and War Resisters' International for a year through the Quaker Peace & Social Witness Peaceworker scheme, during which time he edited the book *Sowing Seeds: The Militarisation of Youth and How to Counter It*. He is now ForcesWatch's Education Campaign worker.

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Recent Developments in Public Services for Young People

Personal Reflections on a Comprehensive Education

Paul Catherall

In this paper I would like to describe the kind of statutory school education I received up to the age of around 16. I attended a "County Primary" during early years and then a Comprehensive Secondary School (post 11) in North Wales, UK, both these schools were Local Education Authority controlled, although the first school I attended had historic connections with the Church of England in Wales and in a previous era had been located on a different site & had been operated as a Church school.

Despite frequent Conservative-Liberal Democrat government derived criticism on the problems of Comprehensive Schools, I can only describe a realistic personal picture of these schools, which in many respects typified the goal of the 1970s public education reforms; these schools were functional, clean and considering the large estate size & capacity of my Secondary School, were well managed.

A number of students originating in my primary school, then moving to the nearby Secondary School graduated from prestigious Oxbridge and London Universities regularly each year, this number tended to represent the top 1-3% of these schools; however a much larger number tended to enrol at other Universities around the UK.

It has always struck me that one of the reasons for a smaller number of Oxbridge entrants from the state sector has always been due to personal financial constraints, and many individuals, including myself remained around the locality for personal or financial reasons, of course this

argument holds less water these days in an era where University fees can reach £9000 per year and students rely on loans, back in the mid-90s we had what now seems like excellent financial cover, namely a partially means tested maintenance grant and universal tuition fees paid by the state. Indeed this situation has remained fairly intact in Wales and Scotland through funds such as the Welsh Assembly Learning Grant, usually used toward tuition fees and an accompanying array of maintenance grant schemes.

Whilst in statutory education, I found the teaching staff to be dedicated, enthusiastic and highly professional, my personal academic development prior to Secondary School was fair but not particularly great and I found the dedication of the teachers in the final years of Secondary School incredible, it is certainly due to their skill in delivering a clearly elucidated and rigorous teaching experience that I was able to advance a little before leaving Secondary School with good GCSE and A-Level results.

The A-Level teaching in Secondary School was excellent, I entered A-Levels having come from a particularly low point earlier on, this slower development could have partly resulted from my personal context, e.g. I was apparently born the last possible day (or thereabouts) for entry into school, 30 August, so was on average around ½ year younger than my peers. It should be noted that A-Level funding for the state-maintained School sector has now been slashed by around 50% since the 2010 Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition came to power.

Both schools demonstrated a highly positive and encouraging ethos and sense of expectation, to the extent that I really can't fault either school. I am probably not expert enough in educational theory to comment on the pedagogy used back then, except to say my first school did use "play" as a means of engaging children in learning (and years later I watched an educational video of myself and my brother engaged in this kind of learning at around 5 years old - courtesy of a former Headmaster who also happened to be my mentor on an educational course). The approach taken in the first school may have furthered my interest in creative activities and this may have served as grounding for personal achievement in school, with subjects such as Art and Design likely providing a catalyst to later development. The use of these kinds of teaching techniques is apparently now a point of controversy, with demands for increasing formalisation and testing from the earliest ages under recent UK governments.

In conclusion, I can only report positive school experiences under the LEA system back in the 80s and I would urge caution and restraint in applying current radical free market reforms to our great state education system, with potential damaging consequences for future generations.

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The Corporatisation of the University - Comment on a live broadcast with Professor Noam Chomsky (MIT) Tuesday, 22 October 2013 at University of Liverpool

Paul Catherall

Noam Chomsky is both one of the most eminent and recognisable figures in the world of academia and popular social commentary, spanning fields including philosophy, linguistics, cognitive science, artificial intelligence and many allied areas of study; he is an emeritus Professor of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), a Fellow of Harvard University and author of many published works in the above fields.

Chomsky is also an outspoken critic and commentator, having publicly debated issues such as overseas Western intervention in conflicts around the world, Western educational policies and the impact of socio-economic trends such as liberalisation of services and the changing relationship between government and society.

The session at University of Liverpool was provided by live video uplink from MIT and was very well attended within a large lecture hall; whilst the audio experienced problems at times, we were able to follow the main points of the presentation, focused around the corporatisation of education in the modern period.

Chomsky described the emerging public education policies of Western economies during the early 20th Century - in the context of developing

political theory and movements. Chomsky described how the need for mass public education had presented itself as a normalising and socialising factor to avert the threat of popular unrest following the era of dissent in the 19th Century, with education perceived as part of a solution for the management of popular order and as a means of proletariat socio-economic participation.

Chomsky described how the interests of public order and national economic progress were historically perceived as congruent with educational investment e.g. University grants, school scholarships, but described how this political view has waned with the decline of community-led politics and ascent of individualistic political systems.

Chomsky provided many parallels between the eras of social vs. individualist political hegemony and the fortunes of educational policy in respective periods, including pre-Regan US government policies toward education during the 20th Century and the period between the 1930s and 1980s in the UK, describing how education has since become the subject of budget cuts, deregulation, marketisation and political criticism to the point of demonising educators.

The advent of a Neoliberal socio-economic consensus in Western democracies was presented by Chomsky as a catalyst for the decline of education and educational services in the Western democracies, characterised by increasing commercialisation and marketisation of education, where education becomes a commodity subject to market value. Chomsky drew parallels between the above scenario and current state of Higher Education in the UK with rising tuition fees now set at £9000 per annum for many UK Universities.

Indeed, the above historical trend is recognisable in the UK, where the English statutory education sector, including primary and secondary schools are in the process of being transformed into "Academies" – usually comprising schools run by third party entities such as corporate education chains, operated under significant deregulation from local authority oversight, safety standards, the National Curriculum, use of qualified teachers, nationally accountable school inspections, ability to sell off assets such as school fields and removal of democratic participation such as use of parent governors.

The depreciation of Higher Education funding and support is mirrored by many parallel developments in the wider education sector, including the recent abolition of the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) in the

UK college sector, which hitherto provided a means for many teenagers to continue their education to achieve employment rather than become NEETs (not in employment, education or training).

The Chomsky lecture provided an analytical and theoretical framework to understand some recent developments and trends in the UK education sector, but also to understand these developments in the context of wider political change in an historical context; this kind of understanding is essential to debate and indeed oppose some of the neoliberal market reforms being imposed on Western societies at the present time - in an era of declining democracy and rise of an increasingly radical neoliberal establishment.

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Recent Developments in Public Services for Young People

The Importance of Libraries for Young People

Paul Catherall

Libraries have been under severe attack under recent political administrations in the UK, many hundreds of smaller Public and larger Civic Libraries have closed since the advent of the New Labour administration in 1997 and subsequent Conservative - Liberal Democrat Coalition of 2010.

Libraries not only provide a location for accessing printed books, but also provide a wide range of related services and facilities, including local historical archives and local knowledge, a place to exhibit and showcase local art and writing, a hub for community events and discussion and a focal point for educational providers to encourage and stimulate reading, writing and creative activities.

My own local Library based in my hometown in North Wales still provides all these services, acting also as a focal point for the cultural legacy of the town which has a rich industrial history.

Other local libraries, which provided all the above vital services are however under threat or have sadly disappeared, despite rigorous protests and campaigns - in the face of government arguments based around digitisation, the ascent of e-books and replacement with comparative providers such as local supermarkets or schools.

The above arguments are of course nonsense, given the adoption by Libraries of digital services, internet and community education in digital literacy.

The brutal closure of public libraries under the premise of digitisation is both misleading and inaccurate, since Libraries provide valuable structured and accessible sources of digital or online information for many individuals without personal access to such technology. "Learn Direct" and related schemes of the 2000s provided communities with the technology and skills to access the emerging World Wide Web, the closure of these services and Libraries which hosted them have deprived communities of these essential services.

The closure of local libraries is particularly detrimental for young people who widely rely on these services to access educational content, careers information or use these facilities for school or college work; it is another naive assumption on the part of the privileged establishment that all citizens possess personal access to technology, thus supposedly making these services redundant.

The ongoing survival of local libraries is important for the wider community and is particularly necessary for furthering the ambitions and needs of young people, surely it is an ongoing travesty to reduce or close these essential services.

Links

The Library Campaign: http://www.librarycampaign.com/

Public Libraries news: http://www.publiclibrariesnews.com/

Voices for the Library: http://www.voicesforthelibrary.org.uk/

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Recent Developments in Public Services for Young People

Threats to Libraries, Facilities for Young People and Public Services in the Liverpool Area

Martin Ralph

Introduction by Paul Catherall

The City of Liverpool on the North West coastline of England has suffered considerable economic setbacks since the wartime era of the 1940s, the decline of dockyard and import industries, alongside heavy industry collapse of the 1970s saw Liverpool suffer particularly harshly during this era. Despite relative economic prosperity during the late 1990s and retail regeneration projects such as the Albert Dock and Liverpool One, the city and surrounding region still suffers from considerable historic unemployment and economic poverty in some areas. The city has seen the ongoing closure of Libraries with their loss of community education and other support services such as internet, technology provision and local business support since the late 1990s, with severe reductions in Library and community services as a consequence of austerity measures imposed by the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government of 2010. Whilst Liverpool City Council (LCC) has been run by the traditional Labour and Liberal Democrat administrations in recent years, it is evident that these local political groups have also led significant cuts to Libraries and related cultural services in the City; more recently we have seen proposed cuts to a wide range of public services which are facing considerable local opposition. The paper below describes a coalition of activist bodies and their campaign against this latest series of cuts to public services in the City. Issues discussed in the paper include the levy

known as the "Bedroom Tax" (arising from the Welfare Reform Act 2012), a recent "under-occupancy penalty" imposed by the current Coalition government on council/social housing residents with "spare" bedrooms who have been unable to transfer to smaller council-owned properties.

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The UK Prime Minister, David Cameron stated in relation to the recent UK floods that money is no object in relieving those areas affected by the severe weather and flooding. According to Cameron the UK is a rich country with a growing economy.

But there is no "relief" from the government for public services and cuts that Liverpool City Council will shortly implement against the working class people on behalf of the government. As we have seen with the "bedroom tax" only those fighting from below will made a difference.

We are facing dreadful plans to make deep and dangerous cuts to ALL local services. "Discretionary" services will be cut by 50% and "mandatory" services, that is adult social services and environmental health, will be cut by 25%. With compulsory redundancies (to public sector jobs) probably being "unavoidable", this is the bleak and only "choice" being proposed by Liverpool City Council, who argue that they have no alternative to implementing Con-Dem cuts.

What is being proposed:

- £42m slashed from the Adult Social Care budget over the next three years**.** This includes a proposal to significantly reduce the number of day centres provided by the council by 2015/16 *(these include community centres provided for older people to socialise with other members of the community, maintain their independence and obtain advice and health care)*.

- £16m slashed from Children's Services. This includes a significant reduction in the number of council-run Children's Centres by 2015/16.

- A £500,000 reduction in spending on library services year on year – in addition to a saving of £1m annual saving agreed last year – which will significantly reduce council-run services in some communities. On top of £1 million cuts agreed last year, this will likely see the number of libraries cut to a quarter of what they were before Joe Anderson's period of office as City Mayor.

- £4m slashed from the budget in the council's Lifestyle Centres, including the closure of Park Road and Everton Park centres, starting with their swimming facilities.

- The likely abolition of school road crossing patrols, to be offset by pelican crossings.

- Slashing the voluntary sector and threatening 300 public service job losses.

In this financial year Joe Anderson (City Major) proved there was no money problem by ironically employing a consultant, Mark Fletcher-Brown on £650 a day. He is a business man and runs a communications consultancy, Fletcher-Brown has stated that the state needs to be shrunk:

"How much of what we ask the state to do for us should we have to do ourselves?...   ...First, our budget is completely out of kilter. We systemically spend money we haven't got. So we will need to cut back and manage with less."

Liverpool City Council has paid nearly £50,000 for these words of wisdom.

We argue that Liverpool City Council should be doing things differently.

There is an alternative and that can begin by using spending reserves, by borrowing money and most importantly by building a national movement

and saying a loud and clear NO to the UK Government. The working people of Liverpool need to fight against all the plans of LCC and link the unions and communities in Liverpool and surrounding areas of Merseyside. We need a national movement against austerity, because it will not go away with the current Coalition government, we also know the Labour party will make austerity permanent, because the working people do not come first, the banks and multi-nationals are their priority.

The LTUC (Liverpool Trades Union Congress) and LATC (Liverpool against the Cuts) have said before and we repeat, the rich are gaining from the cuts and it is only the poor and vulnerable who are suffering and becoming poorer. We argue that LCC should fight to prioritise their real priorities - our communities and services, and NOT the bankers and big businesses.

So it is up to us all, and all communities, to unite and fight against what is the devastation of neighbourhoods and lives.

Links

Liverpool Against the Cuts (LATC): http://liverpoolagainstthecuts.wordpress.com/

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What is the Great University Gamble? Comment on a Presentation by Andrew McGettigan at University of Liverpool, 02/10/13

Paul Catherall

Andrew McGettigan has been invited by the University and College Union (UCU) branch at University of Liverpool to speak on several occasions; the themes McGettigan addresses concur with debates within UCU and across the Higher Education Sector on trends reflecting challenges to academic freedom and University governance.

Recent proposed changes to University Statutes (a form of legislation-like regulation binding a University to certain protocols) has been a common point of discussion for UK Universities recently, where removal of provisions for academic autonomy have been seen as a serious challenge for academic practitioners in this sector. The Statutes debate has been linked to wider questions on University governance and changes to legal status, whereby modifications to Statute could allow for a more flexible approach to the way HE institutions can be governed.

In his presentation, McGettigan described the general trend amongst some HE institutions toward market models in an effort to grow and become more efficient educational providers, this is seen alongside the use of private finance for the purposes of growth – especially in context to declining HE Government funding and reliance on the new expanded £9000 undergraduate tuition fees available to Higher Education institutions since 2010. It can also be seen that a new financial market

has developed in this context, with a "finanicalisation" of the sector entrenched in reliance both on private income streams, but also indirect loans for students under the enlarged fees system.

McGettigan discussed the commoditisation of Higher Education in terms of recent trends, with the degree becoming perceived as a commodity which can to some extent, be purchased. The changing nature of the relationship between the University and its stakeholders can be seen to create a new "marketisation" effectively privatizing the University due to these external financial relationships.

McGettigan argued University governance is seen by some University managers as an obstacle to the above transition, with private equity-owned providers such as BPP (http://bpp.com/university) and the University of Law (http://www.law.ac.uk) operating on a more commercial basis as a consequence of functioning outside Statutes.

McGettigan described the 2011 Coalition (Conservative-Liberal Democrat) white paper for Higher Education, this paper presents HE as a "human capital investment" allowing an individual to use HE to boost future earnings; to this extent, the Higher Education degree becomes an asset; following this logic, McGettigan illustrates how HE institutions will be judged in terms of how well they enable the individual to acquire earning power – comprising another aspect of the "finanicalisation" mentioned previously.

Whilst some academic subject areas (principally Sciences, Technology, Engineering, Health - known as the STEM subject areas) remain reasonably funded by government, other Arts and Humanities subjects are now not funded; McGettigan argues that this has opened up a "level playing field" for non-traditional providers operating within these academic areas.   The student loans system, de-centralising the student as a purveyor of education in an open market now also provides one foundation of this "level playing field" since student loans are not linked directly to traditional HE institutions but could theoretically be obtained for use with non-traditional providers. Non-traditional HE providers are envisaged to expand in future years, this is reflected in recent and planned UK government legislation; current companies operating in this sector include Pearson, its subsidiary EdExel and Montagu.

McGettigan concludes that corporatisation via modifications to University governance would allow for a better fit with the current UK government agenda for Higher Education; such changes would also be difficult to

"undo" and could commit the future of Higher Education institutions to unaccountable corporate boards, opening up a "democratic deficit" for Universities. McGettigan pointed out these reforms would change Universities at root and effectively transform the HE institution into a business.

McGettigan also described how HE management arguments for "institutional autonomy" should not be confused with academic freedom, since greater autonomy merely suggests exemption from current statutory and regulatory frameworks, allowing the HE institution to operate beyond government or statutory scrutiny.

McGettigan also argues the collegiate culture and democratic nature of Universities would be threatened under the government's vision for Universities, with managerial decision making dominating traditional organs of the University, such as Council (if indeed these still existed under the new model). McGettigan finally points out that these changes will mean the transformation of the University "from a public good to economic goods".

Andrew McGettigan's book The Great University Gamble will be available from book sellers April 2013 (See Pluto Press http://www.plutobooks.com), or see McGettigan's Web site http://andrewmcgettigan.org

http://andrewmcgettigan.org/book-the-great-university-gamble/

The Great University Gamble - Money, Markets and the Future of Higher Education
Andrew McGettigan
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The University of Liverpool UCU Academic Charter

Introduction by Paul Catherall, Charter by the UCU Liverpool Branch Committee

The Liverpool University and College Union (UCU) branch of University of Liverpool have produced a charter seeking to hold the University of Liverpool to the highest academic standards for University research and to uphold the values of academic freedom essential for objective and rigorous academic practice.

The UCU Liverpool branch have responded to recent local and national trends in the HE sector, including trends to modify University Statutes governing the protocols, integrity and collegiate values of the University, the transition toward a new model of academic publishing which increasingly centralises HE funding streams and diverts significant funds to commercial providers and proposals to remodel academic & academic-related job contracts.

The UCU Liverpool branch has facilitated campaigns to encourage debate on these issues within the University and has succeeded in preserving the core values of University of Liverpool Statutes and achieved related governance outcomes, including revised staff contracts which preserved integrity for academic practice and staffing conditions.

It should also be noted that other regional and local unions and activist groups such as UNITE, UNISON, TUC and FBU demonstrated solidarity in supporting the UCU; in particular, the local National Union of Students

branch at University of Liverpool played a significant role in supporting these campaigns, including attendance at local Union industrial action and occupation of University premises, this participation by the students illustrates most clearly the seriousness of academic integrity and institutional governance for the wider academic life of the University and for upholding academic and collegiate standards for the University as a public service.

University of Liverpool UCU Academic Charter

The University of Liverpool University and College Union defends academic freedom as a fundamental foundation for the work of the academic in research, professional life and wider society. Specifically, the UCU upholds the following principles as applying to any and all staff engaged in academic work:

Academic freedom

A core principle of Higher Education widely recognised by United Nations agencies, non-government agencies, educational bodies and individual nations is the importance and protection of academic freedom. University staff should have the right to question and test received wisdom, to put forward new ideas and to state controversial or unpopular opinions, and not be disadvantaged, or subject to less favourable treatment by their employer for the exercise of this freedom.

Academic freedom for these purposes then is understood in terms of both: active institutional support; and restraint from institutional interference.

Academic autonomy

The pursuit of knowledge depends on the academic freedom of scholarly practitioners and academic bodies. Academic practitioners must be guaranteed academic autonomy to question, investigate and test current paradigms and present new knowledge freely amongst peers and the wider community. Academic practice must exist in an environment free

from bias and without fear of the need to misrepresent or conceal scholarly outputs.

This applies to the conduct of research, the publishing of research findings, the design of curricula content and student teaching.

The right to tolerance of divergent opinion and freedom from political interference

Academic practitioners must be free to hold, express and debate divergent academic perspectives, regardless of organisational agendas or wider societal pressures, including commercial, political or other imperatives which might preclude bias regarding academic opinions or outputs.

Freedom of expression

The Education Act (No 2) 1986 requires the University to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured for its employees, students and visiting speakers. This also includes the duty to ensure, as is reasonably practicable, that the use of any of the University's premises is not denied to any individual or body of persons on the grounds of their beliefs, views, policies or objectives. Section 43 of the Education (No.2) Act 1986 requires under subsection 3 that the governing body of the establishment shall issue, and keep up to date, a Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech, setting out the procedures to be followed by students and staff in connection with the organisation of meetings and activities which fall within any class specified within this Code.

The UCU calls upon the University to further undertake to ensure that no member of the University or visiting speaker by act, association or incitement violates the rights of any other individual or group because of their ethnicity, religious identity, disability status or sexual orientation (or any other kind of social characteristic and/or disadvantage).

The University as a public/ publicly accountable institution

The role of Quality Assurance and regulatory frameworks are essential for academic practice to reflect the pursuit of knowledge without bias. Additionally, the University of Liverpool and wider Higher Education sector plays an important role as a driver of civic development, social meritocracy and stimulus for regional and national prosperity. As such, the University should remain an independent but publicly accountable institution, regulated within the frameworks of Higher Education agencies such as the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education and the Higher Education Funding Council for England and should not - at present or in the future - pursue a path toward de-regulation to become a non-statutory educational provider, nor seek to deprecate those crucial civic functions previously described.

The collegiate model of higher education

The University must safeguard its historical collegiate approach to Higher Education. Specifically this is grounded in an academic environment which is research and scholarship-led, conducting academic affairs against national and international standards of academic excellence and peer review.

Academic relationship with student representative bodies

The Liverpool Guild of Students / National Union of Students presence on-campus must be closely involved in the academic life of the University, including participation in academic meetings and strategic decision making affecting the student body. The fostering of transparency and inclusivity with regard to student representation is an important element for the dissemination and expansion of the University mission within the academic and wider community and for embedding academic values in the undergraduate and postgraduate student body.

Academic and institutional responsibility

The ability to report irregularities without fear of retribution is an important aspect of collaborative governance whereby all staff and students are encouraged to take some measure of responsibility for the good and proper administration of the University. Academic staff (and indeed all staff and students) should be free to comment or raise concern regarding any aspect of University governance, academic practice or the general conduct of the University and its constituent departments and officers.

Role of the senate, court, faculty fora and other University organs

The University senate, court, faculty fora and other governing organs provide a vital conduit for decision making and University affairs across the academic community and for external community stakeholders. It is important to maintain historical University organs to ensure collective participation of academic staff and community stakeholders in decision making bodies within the University.

As the trade union representing academic and academic-related staff, the UCU is a legitimate stakeholder for consultation on issues of academic management and governance.

Links

UCU Liverpool Branch Web site: http://www.ulivucu.org.uk/

UCU Liverpool Branch Blog: http://draigweb.co.uk/uculiverpool

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Recent Developments in Public Services for Young People

Trends in University Research Funding and the Open Access Publishing Debate of Green vs. Gold

Paul Catherall

This paper is based on a flyer developed for the University and College Union, University of Liverpool branch during 2013.

The Finch Report "*Accessibility, sustainability, excellence: how to expand access to research publications",* 2012) comprises outcomes of the UK Coalition government-sponsored Working Group chaired by Dame Janet Finch tasked with assessing how access to research can be broadened for researchers, policy makers and the public via *Open Access* publishing (where works are published freely without cost to the reader).

This report has important implications for research funding and practice in the UK, with broad implications for the University sector.

Current Open Access has until recently relied mainly on the *Green Open Access* model, with academics self-archiving their works (usually in a publicly accessible website such as an institutional or subject repository). Under the Green Open Access approach, articles published in commercial journals can be made available within an Open Access repository subject to the publisher agreement (see table below).

It should be noted that the Finch report advocates a UK policy toward *Gold Open Access* where journals provide Open Access to articles. Gold Open Access is achieved by publishers receiving revenues from authors or their institutions (via 'Article Processing Charges' *APCs*), or where authors make their work available online potentially through a journal but without incurring an APC or any other fee – the Finch report advocates a policy "*for publication in open access or hybrid journals, funded by APCs*", however Finch also acknowledges a number of methods for Open Access may continue for some time. Further, Finch advocates for re use of works "*to minimise restrictions on the rights of use and re-use".*

Research-funded (mostly prestigious Russell group) Universities, were initially allocated around £250,000 'kick start' funding as a consequence of the Finch Report, which had a spending deadline of April 2013 this would enable payment for around 125 article publications and was not recurrent. Further arrangements/ policies for long term APC funding are as yet unclear and future RCUK block funding will only cover 80% of APC charges (excluding journal administration fees).

The Government has since accepted all of the Finch recommendations. Consequently, the Research Councils UK (RCUK), governing most research bodes in the UK (such as AHRC, ERSC) has announced a new Open Access policy; similarly, the government funding body, Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) has also indicated that it will also shortly be announcing a new policy (see consultation report below), other key stakeholders including HEIs are also implementing the Finch report and RCUK policy.

Following concerns expressed on these proposals, The House of Lords Science and Technology Committee and the Commons Business Innovation and Skills Committee held inquiries into these proposals. The Lords committee has broadly criticized the current stance of RCUK and the approach RCUK has taken in consulting with stakeholders on implementation of the Finch report:

> RCUK did not consult or communicate effectively with key stakeholders in the publishing and academic communities when implementing its open access policy. While we are delighted that our inquiry has shown that RCUK are proposing to phase in their open access policy during the initial five-year implementation phase, this should have been made clear much earlier. That is why we call upon the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills to review how RCUK communicated this important change.

Lord Krebs, Chairman of the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee .

The Commons select committee also criticized RCUK and urged the maintenance of the Green Open Access model as the most efficient means of disseminating research via Open Access, both committees have indicated these committees will be monitoring the implementation of Open Access proposals into 2014 and will be seeking evidence from the research councils regarding the efficiencies for the new model being implemented:

However, almost without exception, our evidence has pointed to gaps in both the qualitative and quantitative evidence underpinning the Finch Report's conclusions and recommendations, most significantly a failure to examine the UK's Green mandates and their efficacy. This has been replicated in the formulation of the Government and RCUK's open access policies and their mistaken focus on the Gold solution as the primary route to achieving open access at scale in the UK. The major mechanism of transition must be Green open access, specifically through strong immediate self-archiving mandates set by funders and institutions, either as a funding condition or tied to research assessment as appropriate.

Business, Innovation and Skills Committee - Fifth Report - Conclusion on Open Access.

The following table illustrates the general principles and operational protocols seen in existing Green Open Access and the emerging nature of hybrid and Gold Open Access models as directed by RCUK:

Green Open Access	*Gold Open Access (Reflecting current RCUK policy)*
Open Access Model: Usually *publisher copyright transfer agreement* allows author to self-archive the peer reviewed accepted manuscript in an Open Access repository. Often an embargo period exists (e.g. 12 months before the work can be self-archived).	RCUK Option 1. Author pays an APC to publisher for publication of work, including Open Access provision *"via its own website (with) immediate and unrestricted access"*, also allowing for deposit in other repositories. RCUK Option 2. Where immediate Open Access is not provided, the journal must allow for deposit in other repositories "without restrictions on non-commercial re-use", the journal can impose a 6-12 month embargo before releasing for Open Access (no APC is chargeable – also see graphical illustration below).
Funding for commercial journals - publishers obtain subscriptions from	Publishers funded by a mix of journal subscriptions and APCs (APC paid by author/ institution using RCUK block grant funds).

individuals/ institutions	
Repository includes range of scholarly works	Repository shift to grey literature, preservation & research data.
Journal selection decided by author/ institution	RCUK funding criteria stipulates Open Access via Options 1 or 2.
Rights issues – usually non-commercial and non-derivative use	RCUK Option 1 has *CC-BY* license *"allowing others to "modify, build upon and/or distribute the licensed work (including for commercial purposes) as long as the original author is credited."* http://creativecommons.org

The following table illustrated the new model for Open Access Publishing as defined in the RCUK Open Access Policy and Supporting Guidance 2014:

Some of the questions we might ask regarding the new model include:

- Is this a sustainable model? Can enough APC funds be provided to meet Gold open access needs?
- Will Universities still need to pay full journal subscription fees in addition to APC charges?
- How will APC funding be allocated in Universities to particular teams/individuals?

- Will elite journals attract higher APCs, creating a market based on ability to pay?
- How will funded research be published in non-UK/ non-compliant journals?
- Will APCs affect the peer review process, academic neutrality or academic freedom?
- How will independent/ early researchers and independent scholarly bodies pay APCs?
- How can research outputs developed in partnership with commercial entities be protected?
- Will academics have to make their work available for commercial use or allow it to be adapted?
- Will institutional and subject repositories be maintained in Universities for Open Access publishing?

It remains to be seen how sustainable the new model will become, certainly there are indications that some organisations, including professional bodies without formal research funding will be effectively unable to pay publishers the requisite APC charges for dissemination in some of the most prestigious and therefore costly journal publications.

This is an emerging area which is currently hard to quantify in terms of current practice and it remains unclear how non research-funded Universities or individual academics are adapting to these additional costs.

The implications for new academics without a significant research impact portfolio and independent researchers or writers unaffiliated with formal research bodies or funding will likely be impacted most by these developments, likely prompting the rise of original Open Access journal publications and indeed a potential decline for some of the most prestigious Gold Open Access publications.

This is an area which will need close observation into 2014 as early muddled research council proposals are enacted by Universities and as non-HEI providers struggle to adapt to the new environment for Open Access publishing.

Links

Creative Commons CC-BY License:
http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/uk

The 'Finch' Report: http://www.researchinfonet.org/publish/finch

Open Access: HEFCE, REF2020 and the Threat to Academic Freedom: http://thedisorderofthings.com/2012/12/04/open-access-hefce-ref2020-and-the-threat-to-academic-freedom/

RCUK Policy on Open Access: http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/outputs

HEFCE Open Access Consultation Exercise: http://www.hefce.ac.uk/whatwedo/rsrch/rinfrastruct/oa/

Lords Select Committee - Lack of clarity over open access is "unacceptable" – RCUK must clarify and monitor its implementation closely: http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/lords-select/science-and-technology-committee/news/open-access-report-published/

Business, Innovation and Skills Committee - Fifth Report - Conclusion on Open Access : http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmbis/99/9910.htm

Business, Innovation and Skills Committee - Fifth Report on Open Access - Full Report: http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmbis/99/9902.htm

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Recent Developments in Public Services for Young People

Comment on Workfare

Paul Catherall

Today in the UK a range of schemes exist to coerce the unemployed, and particularly young jobseekers into low paid, often retail work, this approach to managing unemployment began with the introduction of the New Deal by the New Labour government in 1998 and many similar schemes have followed in recent years under the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government of 2010.

Young people, who prior to the early 2000s could expect to fall back on a range of public services, post-statutory and community learning grants and apprenticeships now find themselves faced with a dearth of access to training and educational funding, and the choice between colossal debt for access to education or the vicissitudes of a job market crippled by decades of under-investment in industry, reduced apprenticeships and the laissez-faire economic management of a political establishment opposed to the managed economic model.

According to the UK Office of National Statistics, the Sept-Nov 2013 unemployment rate for 16-17 year olds was 35.9% and for 18-24 year olds was 18%; these young people represent the hardest hit generation to date in terms of provision for employment and careers services, with record closures of job centres and massive cuts to educational and training budgets over the last decade.

"Workfare" schemes now appear to particularly target this demographic group, with schemes often run by outsourced private recruitment companies remunerated on their success in placing individuals with employers.

Workfare schemes in 2014 include:

- Mandatory Work Activity (MWA) – This scheme imposes sanctions on jobseekers by withholding the allowance under various conditions. The scheme has been deemed to be unlawful after a successful High Court challenge by jobseekers – this would have effectively resulted in around 300,000 jobseekers being repaid withheld allowances of around £130 million, however the UK government has since enacted new regulations to ensure the scheme is legally compliant (via the Jobseekers Back to Work Schemes Act 2013); the UK courts recently enforced a Freedom of Information request for details of companies operating the scheme, UK government has failed to provide this list.
- The Work Programme – this scheme was created in 2011, consolidating previous New Labour schemes such as the New Deal and Future Jobs Fund, the scheme has created multiple partnerships with outsourced placement companies. Jobseekers can be forced to use the scheme if they are unemployed for between 3 and 12 months depending on their age (9 months for the 19-24 bracket); corporate providers include Ingeus, A4e, Avanta, G4S, Seetec, Serco, Pertemps, Maximus, Working Links, JHP, Rehab Group and the Employment and Skills Group. The massive outsourcing of these placement contracts has resulted in colossal expenditure by government, with one provider, Employment and Skills Group being recently awarded a £73 million contract. There have also been suggestions of conflict of interest, with the parent company for Employment and Skills Group, Sovereign Capital having emerged as a Conservative Party donor. The effectiveness of the scheme has also been widely criticised with statistics released in 2012 showing the scheme had a success rate of only 2.3% in establishing ongoing employment.
- Help to work – a new scheme announced at the annual Conservative Party Conference 2013 which has yet to be implemented, this is intended to force the long term unemployed back into work.

- Community Action Programme / "Support for the very long-term unemployed" – launched in 2012, this scheme forces people unemployed for three years to work for benefits for six months.

Companies engaged in providing workfare placements in recent years have included Tesco, Asda, McDonalds, Poundland and Primark, although many companies have subsequently withdrawn from these schemes due to negative publicity in the media and high profile legal challenges by claimants, with Tesco and Poundland subjected to intense media and public attention following cases such as the Caitlin Reilly & Jamieson Wilson legal action claiming breach of human rights.

Concerns for management of unemployment via "workfare" include:

- A negative effect on the ability of individuals to invest time and effort in finding more realistic work, and thereby the potential exclusion of skilled individuals from more appropriate sectors which would have greater benefited the individual, economy and society.
- A serious equality infringement for individuals with caring or other personal barriers to finding flexible work who can find it harder to find employment.
- Effective pay based on jobseekers allowance only, which often results in wages below the "minimum wage" when compared to staff working the same job.
- The use of effective "indenture", where jobseekers loose basic freedoms and become virtual slaves.
- The creation of a new job market based on sub-minimum wage employment, where companies may be tempted to use this new cheap labour rather than recruit staff on regular pay, including minimum wage.
- Creation of unfair economic competition between companies using workfare and those without access to (or refusing to participate) in workfare schemes.
- The payment-by results approach used with private contractors for placement of jobseekers has been argued to exclude or sideline more problematic cases.
- There has been widespread criticism regarding the aggressive assessment approach undertaken when dealing with the long term unemployed and other vulnerable groups such as disability living allowance claimants, with complex forms and procedures which have been claimed to bias assessment against these claimants. These views have been voiced by the Child Poverty Action group,

expressing concern over the impact of complex new assessment processes for single parents and the disabled and the transition toward US style workfare.

An academic paper produced in 2008 by Hallam University, commissioned by the UK Department of Work and Pensions has found the following negative outcomes of workfare when studying similar schemes in Canada, the US and Australia:

- *There is little evidence that workfare increases the likelihood of finding work. It can even reduce employment chances by limiting the time available for job search and by failing to provide the skills and experience valued by employers.*
- *Subsidised ('transitional') job schemes that pay a wage can be more effective in raising employment levels than 'work for benefit' programmes.*
- *Workfare is least effective in getting people into jobs in weak labour markets where unemployment is high.*
- *Welfare recipients with multiple barriers often find it difficult to meet obligations to take part in unpaid work. This can lead to sanctions and, in the most extreme cases, the complete withdrawal of benefits that leaves some individuals with no work and no income.*
- *Some states in the US have scaled down large-scale, universal workfare programmes in preference for 'softer' and more flexible models that offer greater support to those with the most barriers to work.*

(A comparative review of workfare programmes in the United States, Canada and Australia, Hallam University 2008).

These workfare schemes enacted by recent governments have effectively removed the last economic safeguard for young people to live with their dignity and freedoms preserved whilst not able to achieve employment in the current socio-economic climate. These schemes represent a threat to liberty and a worrying shift toward the historic and brutal practice of indenture, effectively enslaving individuals for economic gain.

The depreciation, deregulation and abolition of services for young people, from careers advice to apprenticeships and educational funding are exacerbating the plight of young people; our wider society must take responsibility for the development of our socio-economic infrastructure to train, educate and ultimately employ young people in our society for the future of all our citizens.

Links

ONS Economic Review, February 2014:
http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171766_351740.pdf

A comparative review of workfare programmes in the United States,
Canada and Australia:
http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130128102031/http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/report_abstracts/rr_abstracts/rra_533.asp

Boycott Workfare Campaign: http://www.boycottworkfare.org/

Reuters article - Flagship work programme a "miserable failure":
http://uk.reuters.com/article/2012/11/28/uk-britain-work-idUKLNE8AQ00M20121128

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AB OVO USQUE AD MALA ('From the eggs to the apples')

Paul Catherall

Argument.

Out of the darkness, a consciousness that does not think -
regarded with indifferent love
opens its heart and mind,
unleashing the waves of genius over a dry path.

1.
This is the acephalous man, in his blunt armour -
the weight of the gods is a heavy burden,
as Nodens himself knows in his windy mansio
where anvil clouds throb daily under the sun.

2.
The companionable zephyr, and the chill waters
are nourishing – yet blameless agents,
inattentive spectators in the rows
sometimes taking an Herodian part.

3.
Mummers sowing in the byways –
near an altar foreboding the harvest nemesis,
recall the image of a goitrous season.
black saplings are its fruit.

Links:
http://draigweb.co.uk/draigweb/my-poetry
http://draigweb.co.uk/poetry